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Vancouver mayor prepares to fight against pipeline expansion

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The city of Vancouver is ramping up its opposition to the planned expansion of the trans-mountain pipeline from Alberta to the Burnaby end of Vancouver harbour.

That expansion could result in five times more oil tanker traffic in the inner harbour and increased fears of a major spill.

If Kinder Morgan had its way, there would one tanker a day filled with crude travelling through Vancouver waters headed to China.

Gregor Robertson is vehemently

opposed to the plan.

Next week, both the park board and city council will be voting on motions to fight the pipeline expansion, and city staff will be asked to come up with a bylaw that would hold pipeline operators and oil tanker owners legally and financially

responsible in the event anything goes wrong.

The motion came after Kinder Morgan announced it wants to twin its existing pipeline from Edmonton, pumping 850,000 barrels a day and making it the same size as the proposed Enbridge pipeline.

The crude would then be pumped onto tankers which would pass through Vancouver waters.

The pipeline proposal has pushed the energy battle to the Lower Mainland, where opposition groups have already mobilized.

But with billions potentially on the table for the province, can the city afford to say no?

Robertson says he is not after the big money figures.

"Over the long term, we know we need to build a different economy here in Canada," Robertson told Global News.

But whether it's Enbridge or Kinder Morgan, billions of dollars will flow.

The Enbridge line is expected to generate 280 billion dollars over 30 years and 70 billion in taxes alone.

Policy analysts like Gordon Gibson say the pipelines have to be sold to British Columbians.

"Somehow Alberta and the federal government has to find the way to say to British Columbia, we are going to make this risk worth your while," says Gibson.

"The best way I can think of doing it is to put a lot of money into the development of Northern British Columbia."

It's expected Alberta's newly elected premier Allison Redford will be begin a charm offensive in British Columbia in support of the pipelines. Christy Clark so far hasn't said whether she supports or opposes the pipelines.

The mayor wants the premier to get off the fence.

"It would be nice to know...to have a sense on where our leadership stands on this issue," says Robertson. "If they really are holding back until there's been an exhaustive process, I respect that."

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But I think most people here in Vancouver have an opinion about this and want to be heard. My sense is that this is not well supported here in Vancouver.”

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